THE NEW
# INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • TUESDAY • JUNE 22, 2021 • ₹7.00 • PAGES 20 • LATE CITY EDITION

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## AMARNATH PILGRIMAGE TO BE SYMBOLIC THIS YEAR AS WELL

**The J&K administration said the holy annual yatra will stay symbolic for the second successive year due to the pandemic**

**DECISION BASED ON PANDEMIC SITUATION**

In the normal course, the 56-day yatra to the 3,880-metre-high Himalayan cave shrine was scheduled to start from Pahalgam and Baltal on June 28. But Lt Governor Manoj Sinha said the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board decided to keep the yatra symbolic to save lives considering Covid's unpredictability. However, live telecast of the aartis will happen, he said

**RITUALS TO CONTINUE UNHINDERED**

- Rituals would continue unhindered and arrangements have been made for Lord Shiva's mace to be taken to the cave on August 22 when the yatra ends, coinciding with Raksha Bandhan
- The yatra came up for discussion at a meeting Union home minister Amit Shah called last Friday on the J&K situation

**30 minutes**
DURATION OF THE LIVE STREAMING OF THE AARTI

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARWAD • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

# Flash sales bar in basket of proposals to turn heat on e-comm biggies

BISMAH MALIK @ Bengaluru

AFTER making defiant social media giants fall in line, the Centre seems all set to go after e-commerce biggies such as Amazon and Flipkart by proposing to make the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020 more stringent.

On Monday, the ministry issued a notification seeking suggestions from stakeholders on amending the Rules. Among the major changes mooted by the ministry are appointing a Chief Compliance Officer and a Resident Grievance Officer. Also on the table are compliance with government requests on information sharing, registering with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), prohibition of 'flash sales' offering deep discounts, and banning misleading ads.

E-commerce firms must now also register with the DPIIT within a prescribed period and also display the registration numbers. In case of any imported goods, the country of origin will have to be displayed along with name of the seller to ensure the ranking mechanisms don't discriminate against domestic sellers.

The chief compliance officer shall ensure implementation of the rules, while the resident grievance officer will redress user complaints. Besides, e-tailers shall provide information sought by government agencies for investigations, verification of identities or cyber security activities within 72 hours.

The government has given stakeholders 15 days time to convey their views.

The changes seek to hold e-commerce firms operating in India accountable, said Archana Tewary, partner, J Sagar Associates. But the changes are so wide-ranging it needs to be seen how it will pan out, she added.

The announcement comes at a time when the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has dragged the e-commerce giants to the Karnataka High Court seeking a probe into their business models. Welcoming the notification, CAIT general secretary Praveen Khandelwal termed it the first logical step to making e-commerce an even-playing field. "The gross violation of FDI policy and other laws by the foreign funded e-commerce firms has forced thousands of (brick-n-mortar) shops to close," he claimed.

Amazon declined to comment but sources said Flipkart has appointed key officers to comply with the rules.

**CAN'T FAVOUR A SELECT FEW SELLERS**

E-tailers and their related firms can't engage in any direct sale of goods / services or collect information to benefit a few sellers on thier platforms

Contingency allocation increased second year in a row; Cabinet clears proposal, to pass ordinance

# Covid fund spike: From ₹500 cr to ₹2.5K cr

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

FOR the second consecutive year, the Karnataka Cabinet has decided to enhance the contingency fund because of the Covid pandemic. The cabinet on Monday agreed to pass an ordinance to increase the fund from the existing ₹500 crore to ₹2,500 crore.

The contingency fund facilitates expenditure that has not been accounted for in the budget during a fiscal year. Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai, who is also the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, said an amendment to the Karnataka Contingency Fund Act, 1957 will be passed through an ordinance to enhance the limit.

"The contingency fund was set at ₹500 crore in the budget. But due to Covid management costs, it is being enhanced to ₹2,500 crore," Bommai said.

The Karnataka cabinet last year had enhanced the contingency fund limit from Rs 80 crore to Rs 500 crore, citing the Covid pandemic. The new ordinance will facilitate additional funds to be directed towards the economic relief package, announced in three instalments over the last few weeks by CM BS Yediyurappa.

Apart from financial aid to various sections of people, like ASHA workers, auto and cab drivers, farmers, barbers, construction workers etc, the package will also include compensation of ₹1 lakh to families that have lost an earning member to Covid. The amendment will be a one-time move to mobilise funds to foot Covid expenses.

Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa arrives at Vidhana Soudha for the cabinet meeting, in Bengaluru on Monday

**NEW POLICY SOON ON EFFICIENT USE OF WATER WITHIN KARNATAKA**

Karnataka will soon have a new policy on management and usage of water within the State. The cabinet on Monday approved setting up of a cabinet subcommittee to draft the new policy. Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai said the new policy will include guidelines for water consumption for agriculture, industrial use and drinking water allocation. He made it clear that the new policy will have nothing to do with interstate water disputes but will be limited to usage and management of water within the state. P3

| NATIONWIDE | JUNE 20 | JUNE 21 |
|---|---|---|
| Fresh cases | 58,419 | 53,256 |
| Recoveries | 87,619 | 78,190 |
| Deaths | 1,576 | 1,422 |

| KARNATAKA | JUNE 20 | JUNE 21 |
|---|---|---|
| Fresh cases | 4,517 | 4,867 |
| Recoveries | 8,456 | 8,404 |
| Deaths | 120 | 142 |

EXPRESS READ

**Top LeT terrorist among three killed in J&K**

SRINAGAR: One of the most wanted militants, Mudasir Pandit, and a Pakistani ultra, were among the three militants killed in an overnight encounter with security forces in the Sopore area of Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district, police said on Monday.

SEA YOGA

Naval personnel on board INS Airavat performing yoga to mark the International Day of Yoga on Monday. The amphibious war vessel of the Indian Navy is currently deployed at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam | P3

# B'luru Urban vaccinates 2L, tops list in India

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

BENGALURU Urban topped the list of districts in the country in the "vaccines for all – free for all" campaign initiated by the Central government on Monday, the International Yoga Day.

The target for the district was 1 lakh people, but the figure touched 2,09,256 doses. In the state-wise performance, Karnataka stood second and 10,36,523 people were vaccinated, when the target was seven lakhs. In the BBMP limits, 1,68,958 people were given the dose, though the target was 65,000.

After CM BS Yediyurappa flagged off the Lasika Maha Abhiyana at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Medical College, Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar said, "We had set a target of 5 to 8 lakh for this drive, but we far exceeded it. Congratulations to health professionals for achieving this phenomenal feat. The vaccines were administered in over 8,000 vaccination centres today. It was possible due to micro-planning and cohesive efforts of the government. In Bengaluru Urban, 52,88,684 doses have been given since the vaccination drive started."

He said that the goal is to cover the entire adult population by December 31. "As of Monday, 40 per cent of the State's adult population had been vaccinated.," he said. The State has a stock of around 15 lakh doses of Covishield and 6-7 lakh doses of Covaxin.

# Pawar to host Oppn meet today to take on BJP

**The gameplan**

With the Congress failing to seize the initiative to build a rainbow coalition, analysts see Sharad Pawar trying to position himself as the hub of an alternative non-BJP, non-Congress front

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi/Mumbai

THE process to cobble together a united national front against the BJP at a time when the ruling party's chips are down, picked up momentum on Monday with NCP chief Sharad Pawar calling a meeting of leaders of Opposition parties at his residence in Delhi on Tuesday. It will be co-chaired by Trinamool leader Yashwant Sinha.

The process was said to be ideated by poll strategist Prashant Kishor, who met Pawar on Monday, their second meeting in as many weeks. For the record though, Kishor said he will not be present at Tuesday's meeting, adding he does not believe any third or fourth front can successfully challenge the BJP.

Tuesday's meeting will be held under the banner of Rashtra Manch floated by Yashwant Sinha in 2018. Invites have been sent to leaders associated with the Manch, but informal invites have also gone to some other Opposition leaders. Those associated with Manch include Sanjay Singh (AAP), Manoj K Jha (RJD), Ghanshyam Tiwari (SP), Manish Tewari and Shatrughan Sinha (both Congress), Sharad Yadav and Arun Shourie.

Tewari and Shatrughan Sinha are unlikely to attend. They anyway need approval from the party high command to participate. Invites have also gone to CPI's D Raja and CPI(M)'s Sitaram Yechury.

"The invites have not been sent to political parties but to party leaders who have been associated with the Rashtra Manch in the past or have been associated with Pawar's discussion on national scenarios. The discussion will be on the national agenda - economy, harmony, Covid-19 and leadership among others," said a leader associated with the Rashtra Manch.

NCP minister and chief spokesperson Nawab Malik said the party's national council will meet hours before Pawar's interaction with Opposition leaders.

"The country is going through a very difficult phase. There is huge anger against the BJP-led Central government. Various issues will be discussed in this meeting and the future strategy chalked out," Malik said.

# Online classes pushed 30% students off grid

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

WITH a study by the Department of State Educational Research and Training (DSERT) revealing that up to 30 per cent of students in the State have fallen out of learning and academic activities due to closure of schools through the pandemic, Primary and Secondary Education Minister **S Suresh Kumar** on Monday said academic activities ahead will be planned after scrutinising the report submitted by Dr Devi Shetty, head of a high-level committee on preventing Covid third wave, to Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa on Tuesday.

Dr Shetty has been in favour of proactive steps to salvage the situation for students and to mitigate the damage already done to their academics and learning processes.

Kumar said he knows that Dr Shetty's report includes school activities being planned ahead. The education department will get its hands on the report and scrutinise it before taking any decision, he added.

He cited the DSERT study to emphasise the damage caused to students through the pandemic, which had forced schools shut and pressured students to take to online classes despite many not having the infrastructure.

Especially for rural students, it has been a herculean task as they face connectivity and power issues, he added.

CONTINUED ON: P2

BOUNCING BACK

# 54 days later, Metro chugs, brings relief to commuters

S LALITHA @ Bengaluru

AFTER a long gap of 54 days, Metro trains started running in Bengaluru on Monday. The occupancy was less, but commuters were happy that the fastest mode of public transport in the city was back in operation.

*The New Indian Express* reporter and photographer were at the Baiyappanahalli Metro station when the first train started moving towards Mysuru Road at 7 am.

The train had only three home guards, but no passengers as the security guards forgot to carry the hand-held detectors.

The security guards did not allow the passengers to board as the security check is mandatory.

Among the passengers on one of the later trains was Pratap K M, an engineer at Indian Space Research Organisation.

"I have been working at the office three days a week. I was spending ₹500 on autos to reach the office. Now, I don't have to spend a bomb on my commute," Pratap said.

CONTINUED ON: P2

With more relaxations, passengers jostle to board a BMTC bus in Bengaluru on Monday | SHRIRAM B N

**It is only the first day. When we resumed operations on September 7 last year, it took some time to pick up. It will definitely improve.**

A S Shankar, Executive Director, Operations & Maintenance, BMRCL